NOVA SCOTIA

Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources

Statement of Mandate 2010-2011

Report DNR 2010-1
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1 Message from the Minister and the Deputy Minister

We are pleased to share the 2010-11 Statement of Mandate for the Department of Natural Resources with you. This is an opportunity to report on the progress made on the attainment of one of the long-term objectives in the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*. The adoption of a natural resources strategy covering biodiversity, forests, minerals and parks in order to ensure the sustainability of the province's natural capital is the department's top planning priority.

The first phase of the three-phase approach, citizen engagement, was led by Voluntary Planning and completed in 2008-09. Five key values emerged from this phase and will be reflected in the Natural Resources Strategy when it is completed. The values are sustainability, diversity, collaboration, transparency and informed decision making.

The second phase, stakeholder engagement, is being overseen by a Ministerial Steering Panel and led by separate panels of expertise for biodiversity, forests, minerals and parks. This phase will build on the key values that emerged during Phase 1 and will be completed in April 2010. The final phase, which is the creation of the actual strategy, will commence in 2010-11 once the Phase 2 report and recommendations are reviewed by government. The strategy is to be completed by the end of 2010, fulfilling one of the commitments of the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*.

With the strategy process still underway, it is premature to provide specific information on the department's strategic directions. However it is clear that there will be changes in how the department operates. Voluntary Planning's Report, *Our Common Ground: The Future of Nova Scotia's Natural Resources*, stated that "The status quo is not an option. Current natural resources practices in Nova Scotia for all uses and all users are not sustainable."

We can say that the direction of the department will be aligned with the principles of the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*

The department fully expects that the five values identified by the public during Phase 1 of the strategy development process will be integral parts of the Natural Resources Strategy once it is completed. How the department's operations will change remains to be seen.

In general terms, we expect more collaborative efforts between the department and others. There will be improved processes for engaging the public and stakeholders, with more interaction. The department must continue to build on its scientific knowledge base while providing improved access to departmental expertise and information necessary for informed decision making. Our use of natural resources must be both environmentally and economically sustainable. Finally, there must be open, consistent, clear, and easily

understood processes in place to support how decisions that impact the province's natural resources are made.

While the strategy development process is underway, the department continues to provide many services as part of its ongoing operations. These activities include forest health-related work, such as fighting forest fires and dealing with infestations of insects and diseases that attack the province's forests; enforcing the natural resources related legislation; delivering a range of geoscience, wildlife, forest and Crown lands related programs; operating our provincial parks system and our wildlife park; and enhancing our system of recreational trails throughout the province.

We are looking forward to the successful completion of Phase 2 of the Natural Resources Strategy process, and to the upcoming year when a strategy for managing our natural resources, that reflects the values of Nova Scotians, is completed.

Original Signed By

Honourable John A. M^{ac}Donell
Minister, Natural Resources

Original Signed By

Peter C. Underwood
Deputy Minister, Natural Resources

2 Department Mandate

The department has broad responsibilities relative to the management of Nova Scotia's forest, mineral, park and wildlife resources and the administration of the province's Crown land. The department manages natural resources on an integrated basis. Relationships between resource uses and the effects of management practices of one resource on other resources are taken into account when resource management decisions are being made. The department has responsibility for aspects of the management of natural resources on both Crown land and on private land.

Forests related responsibilities, on both Crown and private lands, include forest management planning and research, developing and implementing strategies that support and contribute to sustainable forests, maintaining the provincial forest inventory, producing data on the province's forest resources, monitoring primary forest production and coordinating extension programs and support for forestry sector development. The objective of these activities is to provide government, landowners, industry and the public with a continuous assessment of the status of forest level change, forest renewal, forest product use and forest management activities for the determination of the long term sustainability of Nova Scotia forests.

The department generates information on forest growth, forest diversity, ecosystem function, and impacts of forest practices through research, surveys, and assessments in support of forest management in the province. Aerial photography, satellite imagery and field measurements provide the information needed to create and maintain an up-to-date forest resources inventory for the province. Field plots provide data used to allow assessments of the growth and health status of our forests, biodiversity and wildlife habitat.

On private lands, the department leverages expenditures on silvicultural activities by providing a portion of the funding. DNR also provides technical and professional assistance and information, supports the construction of forest access roads, and monitors for compliance with regulatory requirements related to forest harvesting and forest management.

A range of services are provided to protect Nova Scotia's forests from fires, pests and diseases. The department delivers a program that is responsible for establishing policy and delivering programs related to forest fire prevention, detection, and suppression on all forested lands in rural areas of Nova Scotia. It includes forest fire management training to department staff and external agencies such as volunteer fire departments, daily monitoring of the fire-weather index and other indicators of forest fire potential, hazard ratings, and initiating action to restrict the use of open fires and travel in wooded areas when warranted.

This program is also responsible for identifying, monitoring and assessing the insect and disease populations active in Nova Scotia forests, making this information available to the

forest sector and other interested parties, providing technical advice to stakeholders, and where necessary, conducting control programs.

Mineral development and geological services related responsibilities include the implementation of policies and programs that help to ensure the best use of the province's mineral, groundwater and geoheritage resources and promote understanding of the risks posed to Nova Scotians by geological hazards. Mineral staff are the principal source of geoscience and mining engineering expertise and services for government, municipalities, industry, non-governmental organizations, and the public.

The department constructs and maintains databases of geoscientific information, creates geological maps for the province, tracks mineral production, monitors compliance with regulatory requirements, administers mineral royalties and the provincial mineral rights tenure system through the Registry of Mineral and Petroleum Titles, and coordinates interdepartmental regulatory reviews of mineral development projects. Programs are undertaken to document the province's mineral endowment and define the potential for new mineral resources. This work supports sound public policy decisions in the area of mineral resource development.

The department operates an abandoned mine opening remediation project and staff participate in ongoing research pertaining to the reclamation of mine sites as well as coordinating the Surface Coal Mine Reclamation Enhancement Initiative. Studies are carried out on the risks posed by geological hazards such as coastal flooding and elevated concentrations of hazardous elements (e.g. radon and arsenic) in rock and soil. This work supports the development of effective mitigation and adaptation strategies that help minimize property damage and negative impacts on human health. Research undertaken on the province's groundwater helps to ensure the wise use of our water resources. Documentation of the province's rich geological heritage provides the scientific information that is necessary to support important initiatives like having the Joggins Fossil Cliffs successfully declared a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Park related responsibilities include the planning, design, development and operation of a comprehensive system of over 120 camping and day-use parks and natural area parks and park reserves, in addition to supporting facilities on Crown lands, various trails and other outdoor recreational opportunities. The provincial parks system preserves unique and scenic landscapes, and cultural and heritage resources, and provides opportunities for outdoor recreation, an appreciation and awareness of our natural and cultural land base, community economic development and amenities for the traveling public.

The park system is comprised of both designated provincial parks, and park reserves. The department is also responsible for approximately 1,200 kilometres of abandoned rail

corridor, and for beaches designated under the *Beaches Act*. The department has increasingly been partnering with community groups, organizations and other levels of government to facilitate the development and/or management of new or improved provincial parks.

Wildlife related responsibilities include the promotion and implementation of the principles and ethics of conservation and sustainable use of wildlife populations, habitats and ecosystems in Nova Scotia. Activities include developing and implementing legislation, policies and guidelines; coordinating department programs to inventory and monitor wildlife populations and their habitats; conducting research to provide information for the management of wildlife and their habitats; developing protection and recovery programs for threatened and endangered species and their habitats; biodiversity initiatives; establishing Wildlife Management Areas and other protected areas for the protection of important wildlife habitats or the conservation of wildlife populations; promoting conservation and the sustainable and ethical use of wildlife through education programs and viewing opportunities at the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park; and promoting habitat and species conservation on private lands.

Enforcement related responsibilities include achieving compliance with all Acts administered by the department and promoting a better understanding of resource protection issues and concerns. Activities include directing the development, coordination, implementation, and delivery of a departmental resources law enforcement and compliance program. Provincial enforcement activities must be coordinated to ensure that resources are protected and that the statutes and regulations administered by the department are effectively enforced. Enforcement services are also provided to the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and to Nova Scotia Environment for their wilderness areas program.

On Crown lands, the department administers the licensing of land for timber and other resource uses with the objective of sound management and the sustainable and equitable allocation of resources found on Crown land. Funding is provided to invest in silviculture in order to work towards forest sustainability, and a network of access roads on Crown lands is maintained. Program development, negotiation, coordination and implementation is done in an integrated manner to provide for a broad range of Crown land resource and forest values such as wildlife habitat, water quality, soil preservation, tourism, heritage, recreational, social, economic, and environmental.

Stewardship and outreach activities are undertaken to provide accurate natural resources related information to Nova Scotians to help them make informed decisions and choices with respect to the use of natural resources. This program is focused on woodlot owners, youth,

Christmas tree growers, home builders, recreationists, hunters, and natural resource industries, but it also reaches out to all members of the general public.

The department is responsible for a range of activities related to legal transactions and property rights associated with the province's Crown lands. The objective is to expand and utilize Nova Scotia's Crown land base in a balanced, sustainable manner, working to extract the greatest value from the province's land assets within the framework of sustainable prosperity. The program manages land transactions (purchases, sales, leasing etc) on behalf of the Department of Natural Resources and Nova Scotia Environment. Approximately one quarter of the province's land base is administered and controlled as provincial Crown land and protected areas. In addition to managing this land, the department administers inland submerged land and submerged lands along the province's coastline.

The administration of Crown land encompasses the acquisition, leasing and disposal of interests in Crown lands, reconciliation of interests in Crown lands, and registration of Crown land titles. Information aspects include the control and management of Crown lands records, development and maintenance of the Crown lands Geographic Information System (GIS) cadastral database, migration of Crown lands into the land registration system, and clarifying interests in Crown land. By maintaining and providing easy access to accurate and secure Crown land records and boundary information, certainty of land titles in Nova Scotia is supported, and information on Crown interests and boundaries is available to the public, lawyers, and surveyors.

The department is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of Crown boundaries and monitoring land surveying activities on Crown land. The surveys program oversees and delivers Crown land surveying projects on approximately 13,300 miles of boundaries related to the more than three million acres of Crown land in the province. Additionally, surveying projects requested by Nova Scotia Environment and relating to the 750,000 acres of protected lands are completed by departmental survey staff. The program assists in the acquisition and disposal of Crown lands and the interpretation of any property interests in Crown land.

The department has a number of off-highway vehicles related responsibilities. These include responsibility for safety and training standards and requirements, trail development policy, and OHV related enforcement. The development of an OHV trails network and the management trail issues is a significant challenge for the department, other departments, and various community groups and associations across the province. Activities include the development of OHV related policies, monitoring and addressing issues as they arise, and working closely with the OHV Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC).

Internally focused responsibilities include the maintenance and replacement of a fleet of hundreds of highway and specialized vehicles (fire trucks, snowmobiles, gators, ATVs and tractors, etc.), as well as the operation and maintenance of a fleet of five helicopters. The road vehicles are heavily used in almost every aspect of the department's delivery of programs and provide a range of capabilities, from staff transportation to heavy equipment operations. Helicopter uses include forest fire detection and suppression, ground search and rescue and natural resource research and management. The DNR fleet (particularly helicopters) plays an important role in the province's emergency preparedness planning. Department facilities range from offices and depots, to pole barns, aircraft hangars, fire towers and laboratories.

Central support services includes some aspects of information technology, financial, communications, planning, asset management, risk management, information and records management, office administration, library services and the Office of the Minister and Deputy Minister. As the host department for the Resources Corporate Services Unit, financial and some information technology services are provided to a wide range of other departments and agencies.

3 Performance Measures

The set of performance measures presented in this section are, for the most part, the measures that have been included in previous business plans. Two measures have been dropped: the level of public satisfaction with the overall performance of the department and the level of public awareness of process in place to manage Crown land. The data used for these measures had to be collected as part of an external public opinion survey and, given the current financial situation, the expenditure could not be justified on a frequent enough basis to provide an adequate time series.

The completion of the Natural Resources Strategy by the end of 2010 will provide the department with specific information on public and stakeholder values and the future direction of natural resource management in the province. Once more detailed direction has been provided, we anticipate developing a revised set of measures to track departmental performance in the areas Nova Scotians identified as being the most important and relevant.

Mandate - Sound Natural Resources Management					
Outcome	**Measure**	**Base Year**	**Ultimate Target**	**Trends**	**Strategic Actions**
Knowledgeable Teachers and Youth	Number of teachers, students and community group members receiving natural resources stewardship related training (thousands)	10.8 (2005-06)	13.5 (2010-11)	Previous Year Data: 2006-07 - 11.3 2007-08 - 13.4 2008-09 - 12.8	Provide in-service and professional development work shops for teachers. Promote educational programs. Work with Ducks Unlimited to provide a wetlands educational experience.
Effective Management of Resource Supply	Percentage of required value of silviculture on private and industrial lands completed [1]	140% (2006)	100% (2010)	Previous Year Data: 2007 - 119% 2008 - 105%	Analyze wood supply requirements. Administer audit, monitoring and compliance programs. Operate the Registry of Wood Buyers
Species Diversity	Percentage of endangered and threatened species with recovery plans in place (as of March 31) [2]	74% (2006)	100% (2011)	Previous Year Data: 2007 - 89% 2008 - 94%	Create Recovery Teams for listed species. Provide support and resources for the development of recovery plans
Conservation of Ecosystem Function	Percentage compliance with *Wildlife Habitat and Watercourses Protection Regulations* under the *Forests Act* [3]	29% (2004-05)	75% (2010-11)	Previous Year Data: 2005-06 - no survey 2006-07 - no survey 2007-08 - 26% 2008-09 - no survey	Promote requirements of regulations and provide educational materials. Monitor compliance with regulations.

1 This measure is calculated on a calendar year basis. Historical data is provided in DNR's accountability reports, which are available electronically on the DNR website at http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/businessplan/default.htm#account.

2 The *Endangered Species Act* requires that recovery plans must be in place one year after listing for endangered species and two years after listing for threatened species. Historic data is provided in DNR's accountability reports, which are available electronically on the DNR website at http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/businessplan/default.htm#account.

3 This measure is calculated based on the results of intensive monitoring of forest harvesting sites which takes place at three-year intervals. The most recent monitoring was in 2007-08. Inspections occur each year as required.

Mandate - Sound Natural Resources Management					
Outcome	**Measure**	**Base Year**	**Ultimate Target**	**Trends**	**Strategic Actions**
Safe Staff and Workplaces	Percent of employees who somewhat agree or strongly agree that the department creates a safe work environment [4]	78% (2004)	89% (2011)	Previous Year Data: 2005 - no survey 2006 - no survey 2007 - 89% 2008 - no survey 2009 - 88%	Work to identify potential problem areas and continue to promote a safe work culture.
Knowledgeable Staff	Percent of employees who somewhat agree or strongly agree that they have access to training opportunities [5]	74% (2004)	86% (2011)	Previous Year Data: 2005 - no survey 2006 - no survey 2007 - 86% 2008 - no survey 2009 - 83%	Maintain training and staffing plans for each branch.

[4] All permanent civil servants were included in an employee survey conducted by the Public Service Commission in February 2004. A survey was undertaken in March 2007 with another survey completed in March 2009. The ultimate target is being set for 2011 and will be based on survey expected to be conducted late in the 2010-11 fiscal year.

[5] See previous footnote.

4 Budget Context

The following table provides budget information for the department for 2009-10 and 2010-11.

Department of Natural Resources - Budget Context			
	2009-10 Estimate	**2009-10 Forecast**	**2010-11 Estimate**
Program and Service Area	**$thousands**	**$thousands**	**$thousands**
Gross Departmental Expenses:			
Senior Management	446	464	444
Corporate Services Unit [6]	4,728	4,512	4,510
Renewable Resources	15,706	17,012	13,791
Mineral Resources	3,800	3,767	3,783
Regional Services	58,515	58,898	64,678
Planning Secretariat	5,022	5,008	4,936
Land Services	3,232	3,177	3,299
Total Gross Departmental Expenses	91,449	92,838	95,441
Additional Information:			
Fees and Other Charges	1,786	2,105	2,013
Ordinary Recoveries	3,520	3,563	3,520
TCA Purchase Requirements	76,950	76,720	10,040
Provincially Funded Staff (# of FTE)	842	769	844

[6] The Corporate Services Unit figures include the cost of financial and information technology services provided to a number of other departments and agencies.